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The State Historical Society of Wisconsin
Bulletin of Information No. 24
January, 1905

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Being items of interest from the Chicago meeting of the American Historical Association, December 28-30, 1904



Wisconsin Historical Society

CONFERENCE OF STATE AND LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

In accordance with an invitation emanating from the programme committee of the American Historical Association, a conference, or "round table," of state and local historical societies was held in Chicago, on the morning of Thursday, December 29th, 1904, in connection with the annual meeting of the national association.

The conference was called to order at 10:30 a. m. in the library of Reynolds Club House, University of Chicago, by Reuben Gold Thwaites, of the Wisconsin Historical Society, who had been designated by the committee as chairman of the meeting. Frederick W. Moore, of the Tennessee Historical Society, was selected by the delegates as secretary.

The chair briefly stated the objects of the gathering to be an informal consultation concerning the problems which beset the societies and the state departments of archives and history. The invitation extended to the organizations and departments, had in the main been restricted to those of the West and South, because, in the opinion of the committee, the Eastern societies were not as a rule confronted by the questions which troubled those in the newer states. Institutions invited to attend had been asked for suggestions. Many had replied, their letters covering so wide a range that it was apparent that a two hours' meeting would unfortunately hardly suffice to touch upon a tithe of the interesting discussions proposed. It had therefore been determined by the committee to restrict discussion at this first conference to two points—the best methods of organizing state historical work, and the possibilities of co-operation between societies.

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Under the first head—forms of organization, and the relations of the work to the state government—Thomas M. Owen, director of the department of archives and history of Alabama, opened the discussion. Mr. Owen enlarged upon the duty which each state owes to its archives and history, and advocated the organization of a state department of archives and history charged with the duty of caring for the archives of the state departments and the local government, as well as the collection of miscellaneous historical material, and the diffusion of historical knowledge. The possibility of establishing a practical, non-partisan department was illustrated by the example of Alabama, where the personnel of the first board was specified in the creating act, and that board made practically self-perpetuating, subject to confirmation by the senate.

Warren Upham, secretary of the Minnesota Historical Society, presented arguments in favor of this work being performed by well-established societies, and done at public expense. The societies of Wisconsin, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, and Minnesota were in this connection particularly described. Important in this organization is the large, well distributed and representative membership, which brings personal influence and enthusiasm to the cause. Where the work is thus already developed by the societies, there is undoubted wisdom in maintaining the existing system.

A. C. McLaughlin, director of the Bureau of Historical Research in the Carnegie Institution of Washington, was introduced and asked to state the plans of that institution. These look rather to aiding than to undertaking research. In this respect the interest and appreciation of the historical societies of the country is desired. It is hoped that the institution may be of service to them and that, by proper correlation, duplication of work and needless searching may be avoided. The institution hopes eventually to secure the transcription of all American documents in European archives, as well as to calendar all collections of such transcripts already in the United States. The last undertaking will be entered upon immedi-

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ately—the former will, in due course, be carried forward in connection with the Library of Congress.

The question of the possibilities of mutual co-operation between societies, state and local, was then taken up. C. M. Burton, president of the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society, illustrated the theme by citing cases (1) in which the work of printing historical materials has been duplicated; and (2) in which the documents have been printed only in part, those portions being omitted which were not pertinent to the particular local or biographical purpose of the editor. Mr. Burton was not quite sure that duplication was always an evil, because the constituencies of the different societies were often widely separated, and few of the members had access to the publications of the other organizations; duplication meant, often, a wider distribution of material—but at least there might be a saving in the costly and laborious tasks of editing and indexing; and there might surely be profitable co-operation in the securing of transcripts and of research. Then again, certain fields of publication could well be divided, as for instance between Wisconsin and Michigan and Minnesota.

Benjamin F. Shambaugh, of the State Historical Society of Iowa, also presented the matter of co-operation between state and local historical societies, particularly in the stimulation of public interest, in the co-operative collection of materials, in the exchanging of duplicates, and in the publication of mutually interesting data.

Franklin L. Riley, of the Mississippi Historical Society, described the condition of affairs in that state, where the efficiently-supported department of archives and history, under the directorship of Dunbar Rowland, carries on the work of collecting and caring for the materials of history; while the historical society carries on the work of research and producing historical monographs, holds frequent meetings, and promotes field work throughout the state.

The several addresses were attentively listened to, and elicited numerous questions, showing a hearty interest on the part of all present. In summing up the result of this first confer-

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ence of historical societies and departments, the chairman said that it was quite evident that among the earliest needs was the publication of calendars of each other's manuscript collections, on some well-accepted plan; there were also needed published lists of other historical material which was available to scholars, in the several society and departmental collections, such as maps, portraits, engravings and illustrative material generally.

Sectional or neighborhood co-operation was also highly desirable. The Louisiana Purchase states, those in the Old Northwest, Kentucky and Tennessee, the Middle West, the Mississippi Valley, the Gulf States, the Pacific Coast, the Canadian Northwest, etc., were all of them sections whose societies or departments might profitably get together now and then to discuss historical needs—the sources of documents, the parcelling out of possible publications, the discovery of gaps which need to be filled; together with questions of administration, public and private support, museums, lectures, etc.

National co-operation, he thought, was also quite feasible. Methods and ideals might be improved by annual conferences like the present. There might well be a national committee, or possibly a commission charged with this object like the Historical Manuscripts and Public Archives commissions), seeking to effect a general improvement—not rejecting genealogy, as has sometimes been urged, but seeking to draw the line between that and real historical work, and cordially co-operating, wherever need be, with the genealogical societies. Then again we shall find the Library of Congress and the Carnegie Institution eager for our co-operation; indeed they are already soliciting our suggestions as to work desirable for them to undertake both at home and abroad.

On motion of Mr. Owen, the council of the American Historical Association was unanimously requested either to form a section on historical societies, or to provide for further round tables, the chairman and secretary thereof to be appointed by the council, and such officers to provide a programme for at least two meetings at the next session of the national association.

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The following delegates were accredited to the conference, and nearly all were present:

Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery—Dr. Thomas M. Owen, director.

Buffalo (N. Y.) Historical Society—Frank H. Severance, secretary.

Carnegie Institution of Washington, Bureau of Historical Research—Prof. A. C. McLaughlin, and Waldo G. Leland.

Chicago Historical Society—Dr. J. W. Fertig, secretary, Dr. A. L. Schmidt S. H. Kerfoot, Jr., and Miss Caroline McIlvaine, librarian.

Evanston (Ill.) Historical Society—J. Seymour Currey, secretary, and Frank B. Grover, vice president.

German American Historical Society, Philadelphia—Emil Mannhardt, Chicago.

Illinois State Historical Society, Springfield—Dr. J. F. Snyder, president, J. F. Steward, Paul Selby, A. M., and Prof. Edwin E. Sparks.

Iowa Historical Department, Des Moines—Hon. Charles Aldrich, curator, and Miss Mary R. Whitcomb, assistant curator.

Iowa State Historical Society, Iowa City—Prof. B. F. Shambaugh, Dr. Frank E. Horrack, secretary, and T. J. Fitzpatrick, collector.

Kansas Historical Society, Topeka—Col. George W. Martin, secretary.

Louisiana Historical Society, New Orleans—William Beer, Prof. Alcée Fortier, president, and Dr. James S. Zacharie, first vice president.

McLean County (Ill.) Historical Society, Bloomington—George P. Davis, president, Ezra M. Prince, secretary, and John H. Burnham, chairman of executive committee.

Manitoba Historical Society, Winnipeg—Rev. Dr. George Bryce.

Maumee Valley (Ohio) Pioneer and Historical Association, Defiance—Dr. Charles E. Slocum.

Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society, Lansing—Clarence M. Burton, president, Detroit, and Hon. Peter White, Marquette.

Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul—Prof. Warren Upham, secretary.

Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson—Hon. Dunbar Rowland, director.

Mississippi Historical Society, University—Dr. Franklin L. Riley, secretary.

Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis—Judge William B. Douglas, president, and F. A. Sampson, secretary.

Missouri State Historical Society, Columbia—Dr. Isador Loeb, secretary, and Dr. Jonas Viles.

Nebraska Historical Society, Lincoln—Prof. H. W. Caldwell.

New York University—Marshall S. Brown.

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Northern Indiana Historical Society, South Bend—George A. Baker, secretary, and Otto M. Knoblock.

Ohio Historical and Philosophical Society, Cincinnati—Joseph Wilby, president, and Prof. Merrick Whitcomb, curator.

Ohio State Archæological and Historical Society, Columbus—E. O. Randall, secretary.

“Old Northwest” Genealogical Society, Columbus, Ohio—Capt. N. W. Evans, Portsmouth.

Peoria (Ill.) Historical Society—Prof. Charles T. Wycoff.

Richland County (Ohio) Historical Society, Columbus—Hon. E. O. Randall, Columbus, and A. G. Baughman, secretary, Mansfield.

Tennessee Historical Society, Nashville—Dr. R. A. Halley.

Texas State Historical Association, Austin—Prof. George P. Garrison.
U. S. Daughters of 1812, Illinois Branch, Chicago—Mrs. Robert Hall Wiles, president.

Wayne County (Ind.) Historical Society, Richmond—Prof. Cyrus W. Hodgin.

Western Illinois State Normal School, Macomb—Prof. James C. Burns.

Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, O.—Wallace H. Cathcart, secretary, and William H. Miner.

Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison—Hon. William W. Wight, president, Dr. R. G. Thwaites, secretary, Henry E. Legler, and Dr. Frederick J. Turner.

Wyoming (Pa.) Historical and Geological Society—Thomas Lynch, Montgomery, state librarian.

FREDERICK W. MOORE,
Secretary

N. B.—Later in the day, the council of the American Historical Association voted that a similar round table of state and local historical societies and departments be held as one of the features of the annual meeting in Baltimore, next winter. Dr. Thomas M. Owen, director of the Alabama Department of Archives and History, was appointed chairman of the round table, and Prof. Benjamin F. Shambaugh, of the University of Iowa, secretary.

The council appointed a sub-committee of the Association's general committee, said sub-committee to report at the next session upon “the best methods of organization and work on the

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part of state and local historical societies.” Secretary Reuben G. Thwaites of the Wisconsin Historical Society was named as chairman, with Prof. Benjamin F. Shambaugh of the Iowa Historical Society and Prof. Franklin L. Riley of the Mississippi Historical Society as the other members.

THE WORK OF AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

At the general session of the American Historical Association on the evening of December 29th, Prof. Henry E. Bourne, of Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, who has devoted much time to the study of the work of state and local societies, presented a paper with the above title.

Professor Bourne said that the societies west of the Alleghanies had had an important share in creating a wider popular interest in Western history. The space given in manuals to the colonial period of the original states has of late years been shortened in order to give more space to the colonial period of the states of the Middle West and the West. The diversity between these societies had had certain advantages in creating a friendly sectional strife which is now leading to a more catholic curiosity. "Everywhere, the achievements of societies like the Wisconsin, the Massachusetts, and the Pennsylvania are held up as proofs of what has or should be accomplished." But he thought that the time had come for intelligent co-operation.

Historical societies, he said, "are, broadly speaking, of two types, illustrated by the Massachusetts and the Wisconsin." The Massachusetts organization, while bearing the name of a great commonwealth, "is not a state organization nor does it receive a subsidy from the state. Resident membership, restricted to one hundred, is evidence of social prominence or of special achievement in historical investigation. The society is a characteristic product of a period and of a state in which higher education and similar scientific activities were, and are still, left mainly to private initiative and generosity. Of the same type are the New York and the Pennsylvania

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societies, and with some reservations, nearly all the Eastern organizations. The Wisconsin Historical Society, on the other hand, is a state institution, palatially housed and generously supported by the state. Its membership is unrestricted, save by the payment of a small fee. Like the great state universities of the West, it is an example of wise utilization of the public wealth to promote the intellectual interests of the community . . . It is a group of individuals to which the state has entrusted the administration of important interests, on its executive committee being placed by law the three principal state officials. Societies of the same type, and avowedly patterned after it, exist in Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and several other Western states."

After discussing the several types of societies, but in the main along the two principal lines, Professor Bourne stated that there are between four and five hundred historical societies in the United States, of whom a little over three hundred have issued publications of one kind or another. Many of the others live only in name, and indeed some of the publishing societies have been evanescent in character. In Alabama and Mississippi, there are very successful state departments of archives and history, so organized as to be beyond the reach of political control; and this plan is being adopted in a few other Southern states—Tennessee, in particular. Such departments work in conjunction with state historical societies, the latter existing chiefly for the purpose of accumulating material and preparing historical treatises; both in Alabama and in Mississippi, the society controls the department.

Professor Bourne also discussed the publications of the several societies, which differ widely in character, and are often irregular in time of issue. In many of these institutions, special publishing funds have been provided; in others, the town, city, or state publishes for the society, as the result of special legislation for each publication; others, as in Wisconsin and Michigan, regularly issue *Collections* or *Proceedings* through the usual machinery of the state printing department.

Work of Societies

"If the society has no resources save its membership fees, its activities are necessarily restricted."

Professor Bourne concluded his interesting and instructive summary of the work of the societies, with a plea both for closer relations between the societies and the teachers of history, and for co-operation between the societies themselves:

"One cannot review even in the most cursory fashion the work of American historical societies without being impressed by the number of centres of activity and the substantial results already accomplished. If there are societies that are moribund, this is due either to the lack of an income sufficient to enable some one, in the words of Dr. Thwaites, to 'devote his entire time to the work, becoming personally responsible for the conduct of the society's affairs, and imparting to it life and individual character,' or to a loss of consciousness on the part of its directors of what other societies are doing. Part of the remedy lies in greater co-operation among societies in the same state, and between the societies and the historical faculties of the local universities. In a few states, as in Wisconsin, it is arranged that local societies are members of the state society, and may each send a voting delegate to meetings.

"The importance of intimate relations between the societies and historical faculties is evident from the fact that the larger faculties, with their bodies of graduate students, are virtually historical societies, engaged in important researches, the results of which appear in published theses or in series of publications like the *Columbia Studies in History, Economics, and Public Law*, the *Harvard Historical Studies*, and the *Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science*. The relations of these two bodies are especially intimate in Wisconsin, Iowa, Nebraska, and Mississippi. The membership of several of the older societies, like the Massachusetts, the Rhode Island, and the Pennsylvania, includes members of the faculties of Harvard, Brown, and the University of Pennsylvania. It is difficult to establish such relations unless the two are conveniently near one another.

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"Is it possible to increase the co-operation between the societies as a whole? Those most actively interested in them are generally members of either the American Library Association or of this association, sometimes of both. Last September, at St. Louis, steps were taken to affiliate for common work on the history of the Louisiana Purchase, the societies of states and territories once included within its limits, and of neighboring states.¹ In France, the historical societies, with the other scientific associations, hold an annual congress which is much like the annual meetings of this association. The congress is directed by the *comité des travaux historiques*, which is appointed by the ministry of public instruction. If some common direction is needed in a highly centralized country like France, where the intellectual life centres in Paris, it is much more necessary here. The necessity is present, the materials are at hand, the question is—What shall be done?"

¹ A committee on organization was appointed at the St. Louis conference, consisting of President Walter B. Douglas of the Missouri Historical Society, President Alcée Fortier of the Louisiana Historical Society, and Secretary Reuben G. Thwaites of the Wisconsin Historical Society. On call of Judge Douglas a meeting to discuss organization was held at the Chicago University, the afternoon of Thursday, December 29th. The opinion of the majority of those present appeared, however, to be unfavorable to so extended and formal an organization as that proposed at St. Louis; but quite desirous of frequent sectional conferences and of an annual round table, as later provided for by the council of the national association. The committee was nevertheless continued, with authority to report next year.

Carver's Travels

THE AUTHENTICITY OF CARVER'S "TRAVELS"

In his paper on "The Travels of Johnathan Carver,"¹ read before the American Historical Association in Chicago, the evening of December 29, 1904, Prof. E. G. Bourne of Yale University, presented the results of an investigation as to the originality and authenticity of the second part of this famous book, which is devoted to giving a systematic account of the manners and customs of the Indians in the Northwest, and of the animals and products of the soil.

Professor Bourne brought to light the fact that as early as 1792 Oliver Wolcott of Connecticut, then comptroller of the treasury in Philadelphia, wrote the geographer Jedidiah Morse, that he had been informed on good authority that the book was written under very inauspicious circumstances; adding that Carver was an ignorant man, incapable of writing such a work, and that there was reason to believe it to be a compilation from other authors.²

Next, he cited contemporaneous but entirely independent criticisms by Schoolcraft in 1823,³ and by Keating in 1824,⁴

¹Jonathan Carver, *Travels through the Interior Parts of North America, in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768* (London, 1778). Later editions were: London, 1779, 1781; Philadelphia, 1784, 1789, 1792, 1795, 1796; Boston, 1794, 1797; Edinburgh, 1798, 1807, 1808; Charleston, 1802; Walpole, N. H., 1813, 1838; New York, 1838. There were translations into German (Hamburg, 1780), French (Paris, 1784; Tours, 1852), and Dutch (Leyden, 1796).

²Gibbs, *Memoirs of the Administrations of Washington and Adams* (New York, 1846), i, p. 76.

³Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs* (Philadelphia, 1851), p. 196.

⁴Keating, *History of Long's Expedition* (Philadelphia, 1824), i, pp. 325, 326.

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both of whom assert that the author of the *Travels* drew considerably from Lahontan. In addition, Schoolcraft declared that material was also derived from Charlevoix's *Travels*. More detailed and more positive still, were the assertions of Greenhow, the historian of Oregon, that the second part of Carver's *Travels* was a compilation from Charlevoix, Hennepin, and Lahontan.¹ Greenhow was familiar with Keating's views, but apparently not with Schoolcraft's, whose *Memoirs* were published in 1851, or with Wolcott's, whose letter first saw light in 1846. These early criticisms appear to have escaped the notice of later writers who have written upon Carver's *Travels*, for neither Moses Coit Tyler, in his *History of American Literature*, nor the authors of the articles on Carver in the various cyclopædias, breathe any suspicion as to the authenticity of the work.

In the second part of his paper, Professor Bourne gave the results of his attempt to test the correctness of the assertions of Wolcott, Schoolcraft, Keating, and Greenhow. He cited a few passages showing how the author of the *Travels*, whoever he might be, drew from books information which a genuine traveller would not think of going to books for. For example, the description of the personal appearance of the Indians was taken from Lahontan; of their keenness in detecting a trail, from Charlevoix; of their game of lacrosse, partly from Charlevoix and partly from Adair's *History of the American Indians*. The description of the Indian sled (or toboggan), with which the real Carver must have been perfectly familiar, is taken word for word from Charlevoix. Again, the real Carver must have many times seen Indians scalp prisoners, for he was a veteran of the French and Indian War, and one of the survivors of the Fort William Henry massacre; but notwithstanding such presumable personal observation, the author of Carver's *Travels* borrows word for word Adair's account of the process of scalping. The accounts of the animals are largely from Charlevoix. "The short vocabulary of the Chip-

¹Greenhow, *History of Oregon* (Eoston, 1845), pp. 142, 144.

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peway Language" is almost entirely taken from Lahontan's "Dictionary of the Algonkin Language." Some of the changes are pure blunders of hasty transcription, which one familiar with the language, as Carver pretended to be, could not have made; as, for example, where Carver gives *Sheshikwee* for "dart," when Lahontan gives it as the name of a particular kind of dance; or again, where Carver gives the word for "heart" which Lahontan gave for "hart."

Professor Bourne's conclusion was, that the second and larger part of Carver's *Travels* is not an original work, but a literary compilation, like Sir John Mandeville's *Travels* or Benzoni's *History of the New World*; and that the first part was probably put together by the same writer, from Carver's notes or oral recollections. As to the extent or reality of Carver's journey up the St. Peter's (or Minnesota) River, Professor Bourne felt disposed to accept the view of Kearney, who apparently had studied the question very thoroughly on the ground, that Carver had entered the river but did not ascend it as far as he pretended.

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